Under the Global System of Trade Preferences (GSTP) India is granting preferential access to six agricultural products to constituent developing Member countries. Under the Bangkok Agreement preferential access is currently granted to nine agricultural products.

The regional trade arrangements provide for trade defence measures which can be resorted to in case of a surge in imports and injury to the domestic industry and farmers. Moreover, the arrangements also incorporate cooperation among the customs authorities of the Member countries in order to ensure that the qualifying origin criteria are not violated. In specific instances, monitoring mechanisms to prevent circumvention of the qualifying origin criteria have also been established, such as under the India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement.

Tea Gardens

1779. SHRI CHITTABRATA MAJUMDAR:
SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of closed/abandoned tea gardens in the country, State-wise;

(b) the action taken by Government for payment of P.F. arrear of the workers in these tea gardens; and

(c) the action taken by Government to ensure 100 per cent sale through auction as recommended by the Committees formed by the State Government of West Bengal and Assam to study the problem in tea industry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) As per available information, 34 tea gardens are at present closed/abandoned. State-wise details are as follows:—

State	No. of gardens which remain closed at present
West Bengal	10
Assam	4
Tripura	1
Kerala	19
TOTAL :	34

(b) Appropriate action as provided in the relevant Acts is taken against defaulters for recovery of the outstanding dues of Provident Fund.

(c) There are different views with regard to fixing the percentage of tea to be sold compulsorily through public tea auctions and no final decision has been taken in this regard.

Development of tea industry

1780. SHRI CHITTABRATA MAJUMDAR:
SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether tea is being declared a national drink of the country and if not, the reasons therefor;

(b) whether any incentive for production of orthodox tea is being announced;

(c) whether any modality has been worked out by Government for formulation of a special purpose fund for a replantation/rejuvenation of tea gardens and if so, the details thereof; and

(d) whether a Small Grower Development Agency is being set up under the aegis of Tea Board for the small growers in tea sector and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) Declaration of tea as a national drink of the country is one of the recommendations that emerged during the stakeholders' conference on challenges before Indian tea industry held on 16th and 17th September, 2004.